



Hayes: Book author.

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WHEN Roger Hayes served in Vietnam, he never dreamed he'd one day author a memoir about his experiences. In May, his book, "On Point—A Rifleman's Year in the Boonies: Vietnam 1967-1968," was published by Presidio Press.

Hayes began developing the book in 1996, reconstructing dates, places and events from letters he'd written to his mother, which she had kept neatly bound in chronological order. He completed the first draft in three months, the second in six, and wrote four more before he sent the manuscript to the U.S. Copyright Office. The book was recently ranked 10th among sellers in the St. Louis area, where Hayes is a park ranger for the St. Louis District headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"I feel extremely lucky to be where I am with this," he said. "A lot of good writers never get this far. All the time I was writing, I felt that there was little chance of selling my story, but getting it down on paper was enough to keep me going. I thought it would make a good family and unit history. Knowing that it will soon be on the shelves of book stores all across America really blows me away."

The story covers Hayes' military career, beginning with a draft-board physical at the age of 18. Two years later, while he was in college, he was drafted. After basic and advanced training, he arrived in Vietnam as

a PFC, and was a point man and tunnel rat for the 25th Infantry Division, eventually becoming a squad leader. He proudly returned home wearing sergeant stripes. During his tour, he was wounded four times and decorated six times.

The book is more than a story about war, he said. It describes the close relationships formed by the men of his platoon, who depended on each other for support, entertainment and survival. It illustrates the anguish of those on both sides who were touched by the war. Hayes included a bit of humor and romance as necessary relief from the tragedy. — *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Public Affairs Office*

THE University of Northern Iowa will dedicate a memorial this month — a lighted flagpole with commemorative plaque — to **2LT Robert J. Hibbs**, a Cedar Falls native, UNI alumnus and Medal of Honor recipient.

Hibbs graduated from UNI in 1964 and was sent to Vietnam in 1965. On March 5, 1966, he was in charge of a 15-man patrol when he was killed while providing cover for a wounded soldier and the attempted withdrawal of his unit.

"It's only appropriate that the university recognize its most decorated soldier," said LTC Michael P. DePuglio, head of the UNI Reserve Officers' Training Corps. "He's been an unsung hero for 34 years."

The memorial will be located in a grassy area outside the main entrance of the West Gym, which houses the ROTC program. — *University of Northern Iowa Public Affairs Office*

SSG Kazuo Otani, a member of the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team killed in action in World War II, was among 22 Asian-Pacific Americans recently awarded the Medal of Honor. Only seven of those honored by President Bill Clinton are still living.

Ted T. Otani, who like many other relatives received the medal for a deceased family member, remembered a wartime presentation that occurred shortly after his brother's death. Army officials presented his family with a folded American flag during a brief ceremony in the gymnasium of the American internment camp for Japanese-American citizens, Otani said.

"This is truly a memorable moment in American history," Otani said of the recent ceremony.

Otani: Accepting on his brother's behalf.



emony. "A great nation did what great nations rarely do, admit a major mistake," that of allowing prejudice to preclude the proper honoring of Asian-Pacific Americans who fought and died for America.

Otani praised U.S. officials who once wrongfully imprisoned his family, for conceding they made a mistake and correcting it.

Twenty of the 22 Medal of Honor recipients belonged to the 100th Infantry Battalion or the 442nd RCT. In 1944 the two units merged, with the 100th Inf. Bn. becoming the 442nd's 1st Bn.

The 100th Inf. Bn. was activated in Honolulu in 1947 as a Reserve unit. It's the only infantry battalion in the Army Reserve force structure and is part of the 9th Regional Support Command. The battalion headquarters is located at Fort Shafter, Hawaii. — LTC Randy Pullen, Office of the Chief, Army Reserve, PAO

EVERY year, post **CSM Don Watkins**, from the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., runs in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. "Little did I know last year I'd be running for myself," Watkins said.

One of nearly 180,000 men diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1999, Watkins is among the 80 percent who fought the disease and won.

A blood test during an over-40 physical at Dunham Health Clinic at Carlisle last summer indicated something was wrong. A further examination found a lump that confirmed he had a growth in his prostate.

Watkins underwent surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in November 1999, just five days after scoring 300 points on his annual Army Physical Fitness Test.

"I remember going into the operating room and thinking that it looked like a scene out of 'ER.' The surgery went so well that when I woke up, I had to check to make sure I had had surgery," he said. He left the hospital four days later.

Despite the discomfort of the catheter that had been inserted following his surgery, Watkins walked three to four miles a day. The catheter was removed in December.

He has depended on family and friends for continuing support, among them fellow cancer survivors Steve Krom and Linda Berkowitz.

"Steve told me what to expect on everything from the biopsy to the surgery," Watkins said of the man who also beat prostate cancer. Krom provided hope when Watkins was

searching for answers, he said.

"I wanted to be there for him like he was there for me," said Berkowitz, a breast cancer and lymphoma survivor. "It's important to see someone on the other side of the illness who's doing well."

Berkowitz also shared with Watkins her insights on how radiation therapy affected her, and what he could expect. "At first, you're petrified," she said. "You just have to listen to what your body is telling you during the treatments."

Watkins began the first of 35 treatments in February at the Polyclinic Hospital in Harrisburg, Pa. Although it's normal for patients to experience a loss of appetite and lose weight, he suffered only minor nausea and one week when his food tasted metallic. "I forced myself to eat and not dwell on the treatments." He received treatments in the evenings so he could work in the mornings, and he continued to work out and lift weights.

Not one to consider himself a victim, Watkins attends a quarterly support group for cancer survivors in Mechanicsburg, Pa. "I surround myself with people to make me strong."

His advice for other cancer sufferers is "don't isolate yourself from family and friends. You're only a victim when you forget all the good things you have in life."

At 45, Watkins concedes that "the dreaded 'C' word" is now a permanent part of his life. "Not a day goes by that I don't think about it," Watkins said. Before his cancer, he said he never heard or read anything about prostate cancer, because it didn't affect him. Little did he know that three of his uncles had been diagnosed with the same cancer.

"It's just not something that's discussed. Men die because they have too much pride to talk about it," he said. Had he known about his uncles, all of whom are healthy now, he would have scheduled a prostate screening sooner.

"If talking about what I've gone through can save just one person, some good will have come of my having cancer," he said. — SSG Mike Brantley, Army War College PAO

"I surround myself with people to make me strong."



Watkins: Fighter, not victim.

